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SUBJECT: WE DON'T NEED NO EDUCATION - STRIKING TEACHERS IN  
COTE D'IVOIRE

11. (U) SUMMARY. The Union of Secondary School Teachers (SYNESCI) is staging a 48-hour strike starting April 28 to protest non-payment of 2004 exam-correction allowances. This strike comes just two weeks after a 72-hour strike by primary school teachers on April 11-13, also to protest non-payment of exam-correction allowances. The government of Cote d'Ivoire has been confronted with an increasing number of strikes, threatened strikes, and non-payment protests in the past two months. END SUMMARY.

12. (U) Secondary school teachers have not been paid for correcting the 2004 final exams, nor for their time proctoring the exams. Other grievances include the increase in contributions teachers must make to health insurance. There are a total of 14,000 secondary school teachers, of which 10,000 are members of SYNESCI. SYNESCI is requesting a total of USD 600,000 in payment. This sum is to be distributed among the teachers according to the number of exams graded. SYNESCI has also requested payment of USD 2 per hour for proctoring the exam.

13. (U) The announcement of the SYNESCI strike comes just two weeks after the union of primary school teachers (SNEPPCI) strike. From April 11 through April 13, SNEPPCI staged a 72-hour strike to protest non-payment of exam-correction allowances as well as to protest the non-payment of redeployment allowances. Redeployment allowances were authorized for teachers who returned to northern, rebel-held territory. Before the strike, the Ministry of Education offered a total of USD 418,000 to be divided among the teachers according to the number of exams they each graded, however SNEPPCI felt the amount was insufficient. After the 72-hour strike, the teachers returned to the classroom. The union has given the government of Cote d'Ivoire one month to come up with a better settlement.

14. (SBU) At both the primary school level and secondary school level, the teachers unions have divided along political affiliations. SYNESCI, the secondary school teachers union, is actually splintered into two groups, one politically aligned with President Gbagbo's FPI party, and one aligned with the opposition. The anti-government camp is the one that went on strike April 28. The pro-FPI SYNESCI camp had planned a strike for May 2, but canceled it after announcing that the government of Cote d'Ivoire had partially met their claims. Similarly, it was the anti-government union for primary school teachers, SNEPPCI, that went on strike April 11-13. The pro-FPI union for primary school teachers, SAEPPCI, did not join the April strike.

15. (U) At the government level, in early April employees of the Ministry of Finance threatened to go on strike to protest non-payment of their working allowances. Employees are entitled to allowances associated with their jobs on a quarterly basis. The strike was suspended until the beginning of May to allow for negotiations. There have been no reports of any progress on these negotiations.

16. (U) These strikes come on top of a March 29 "dance-in" strike by newly graduated police officers that brought Abidjan traffic to a standstill for three hours. They were protesting non-payment of war bonuses and because they continue to receive student or recruit pay instead of full pay as police officers.

17. (SBU) COMMENT. The large number of bonuses and allowances that are not being paid indicates how shaky the 2005 budget is. The government is already unable to pay allowances to teachers, police, military and government workers. If revenues dry up much further the government may not be able to meet its basic salary payments as well. The 2005 budget bill assumes a normalized political situation. The political situation is improving, and that could help revenues and eliminate war-related premium pay. Meanwhile, however, the number of disgruntled Ivoirians is growing, and under the best of circumstances this could present problems for President Gbagbo and his FPI party in this Fall's elections. Should the peace process grind once again to a halt, these so-far scattered strikes could turn into more serious social unrest. END COMMENT.

